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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTERREY 000800

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SUBJECT: TWO MONTH TRUCE HAS DRASTICALLY REDUCED NORTHERN BORDER DRUG VIOLENCE, BUT NEW KILLINGS ENDANGER THE TRUCE

REF: A. A) MONTERREY 567

[1](#)B. B) MONTERREY 666

[1](#)C. C) MONTERREY 704

CLASSIFIED BY: Bruce Williamson, Consul General.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. There has been a dramatic reduction in the level of drug violence in Nuevo Leon over the last two months, apparently resulting from a nationwide "truce" between the two primary drug cartels. The truce has been described in press reports, including detailed descriptions of the negotiations, and our sources confirm these accounts. Apparently, the drug cartels negotiated the truce because the drug war had become too expensive and was bad for business. The crackdown by Mexican federal forces may have also played a role. We cannot be sure how long the truce will hold, and a recent spike in drug violence could indicate that it is over. Post law enforcement agencies believe that the drug cartels have used this time to regroup and strengthen themselves, while state and local law enforcement just breathed a sigh of relief. However, the Mexican federal government and army have continued to mount operations, and have had successes against the Gulf Cartel.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The number of drug executions in Nuevo Leon has substantially decreased in the last two months. There were 75 drug-related executions in the first five months of 2007, or an average of 15 per month. There were also eight killings in the first half of June, but here have been only three drug executions from June 19 to August 16, although two of them were policemen. Meanwhile, the number of kidnappings has continued apace, with 58 kidnappings through May, or 11 per month, and there were 14 kidnappings in June, July and the first half of August. Generally, kidnappings here are narco-related (i.e., settling of accounts). Some of the victims are released in a few hours, while other are never seen again.

[1](#)3. (C) However, violence has surged again since August 17, when two Mexico federal AFI agents (the equivalent of the FBI) were kidnapped on duty, and they were later found dead, bound, naked, and gagged, having died of asphyxiation. The AFI agents were part of a special anti-kidnapping investigative unit. On August 20, three transit police were kidnapped, and two of them were found alive on August 22, but gagged and beaten, and are now recovering in the hospital. The third policeman has not been found. In addition, on August 22, two carloads of heavily armed men entered a police jail in the Monterrey suburb of San Nicolas and forced the policemen (who did not fight back) to open a cell and hand over a prisoner, who was executed shortly thereafter. The brazenness of this assault speaks volumes about how local

police are intimidated.

¶4. (C) Post law enforcement agencies agree that the primary motivation for the truce was that the drug war was expensive and bad for business, since the drug cartels had to hire hit men, increase their own security, and risk losing drug shipments. Post agencies agree that the truce was not caused by pressure from state and local police forces, since they have not solved any of the drug execution cases. Indeed, we have heard reports of drug cartels directly communicating with apparently honest local police, indicating some level of official tolerance of narcotics trafficking activity.

¶5. (C) However, there has been increase pressure on the Gulf Cartel from the Mexican federal government and Mexican military, which could have encouraged the drug cartels to close ranks against pressure from the Mexican federal government. The police have arrested several low-level components of the Gulf Cartel, including 10 taxi drivers who acted as lookouts in June (see Reftel A), and 14 members of "los Halcones" in July, who offered security to the drug cartel (see Reftel B). In addition, DEA and the Mexican federal police mounted a joint Operation Puma in August which captured 32 Gulf Cartel operatives in Texas, along with 2.6 tons of cocaine, 15.9 tons of marijuana, and \$5.5 million in cash. Operation Puma also launched raids in Mexico, but the targets had been forewarned and fled before the raids began. Mexican law enforcement officials have not had similar success in Nuevo Leon against the Sinaloa cartel.

¶6. (C) Post believes that there is no way to predict how long the truce will hold. Previously there was a Christmas truce in 2006, but the cartels ramped-up the executions once the holiday season was over. Although the truce apparently has no time limit, it could be broken at any time, by a lost shipment, a feud that spins out of control, or one cartel thinking that the other is vulnerable and moving to take away some lucrative drug shipping routes. The recent rash of violence could indicate the truce is breaking down, but that is not likely to be certain

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unless full-scale violence resumes.

¶7. (C) COMMENT. Although the truce has been a relief for Nuevo Leon, it has not helped the war on drugs. The truce is a boon for Monterrey's image and its economy. Monterrey has been able to maintain robust investment (see Reftel C), but over the long run, the narco-violence was damaging Nuevo Leon's image. If the truce is maintained, Nuevo Leon could regain its image as a safe place to invest. As to the drug war itself, although the drug violence has claimed many casualties, including police officers, it harmed the drug cartel organizations and provided targets of opportunity for law enforcement officials to hit the cartels. Post law enforcement agencies believe that the drug cartels are using the opportunity to regroup and rearm, while the state and local police forces are merely resting and are not substantially strengthening themselves. We are more optimistic that the Mexican federal police and military are continuing operations and are preparing to continue confronting the drug cartels. END COMMENT.
WILLIAMSON